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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-eighth year

Identical letters dated 20 September 2013 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to convey our serious concerns regarding the fragile situation on the ground as a result of the continued pursuit by Israel, the occupying Power, of illegal policies against the Palestinian people and their land. Over the past weeks, while the international community has patiently awaited confirmation of tangible progress in the resumed negotiations between the two sides, tensions have continued to rise following several negative developments that are widening the gap between the hopes and expectations for the political process and the reality on the ground. Israeli settlement activities, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, military raids and constant provocations, including incitement to religious conflict by extremist Israeli settlers, are exacerbating conditions on the ground and reinforcing doubts regarding the desire of Israel for or commitment to the peace that the State of Palestine, with the strong support of the international community, has been earnestly seeking and remains committed to achieving.

We are extremely alarmed by the escalation of aggressions in Occupied East Jerusalem, in particular in and around Al-Haram Al-Sharif and Al-Aqsa Mosque, which continue to be subjected to provocations by Israeli extremists, including settlers and Government officials, among them ministers. The blatant disrespect for the mosque and its worshippers and the continued declarations of further incursions into the holy site are tantamount to grave acts of incitement that are stoking religious sensitivities and aggravating already elevated tensions.

Among several incidents in this regard have been the following: on 4 September, Israeli occupying forces stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque, injuring three women and pepper-spraying Palestinians who were protesting after 40 Jewish extremists stormed the compound; on 4 September, the occupying forces banned Jerusalem's Mufti, as well as other religious and prominent Palestinian figures, from entering Al-Aqsa Mosque, and a group of Jewish extremists stormed Al-Haram

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Al-Sharif compound to perform prayers on the eve of the Jewish New Year; on 5 September clashes broke out in the neighbourhood of Silwan when Israeli settlers danced on copies of the Quran; on 6 September, occupying forces raided Al-Haram Al-Sharif compound following the Friday prayers, causing 55 injuries and arresting 15 Palestinian civilians; and on 9 September, Sheikh Azzam al-Khatib, Director of the Jerusalem Waqf and Al-Aqsa Affairs, reported that 150 Jewish extremists had entered the compound under heavy police guard.

It is alarming that Israeli officials continue to recklessly fuel these tensions by encouraging extremists to persist with such provocations, which threaten to ignite religious conflict, with far-reaching and dangerous consequences for the region and beyond. We therefore once again draw the international community's attention to this serious matter for the State of Palestine and the entire Muslim world, and call for vigilance in the demands for a halt to all such Israeli incitement and for respect by the occupying Power for its obligations under international law, including respect for the sanctity of religious sites.

Regrettably, Israel has also persisted with its construction of settlements and the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem — the territory that constitutes the State of Palestine — in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. In addition to other settlement activities, on 9 September, Israeli bulldozers began to construct a dividing zone between the Palestinian town of Issawiya and an illegal settlement on Occupied French Hill in East Jerusalem. Israeli bulldozers also continued to level private Palestinian lands in Salfit for establishment of infrastructure for a new Israeli settlement. The occupying Power issued eviction notices to residents of 28 houses in the Qirami neighbourhood in East Jerusalem under claims that it was for their own safety, because of fears that their homes have dangerous cracks in the walls that are the result of illegal Israeli excavations underneath the Old City. Moreover, once again, the occupying Power has undertaken the demolition of Palestinian structures in the Khirbet Makhool village in Tubas, in the Jordan Valley, displacing more than 100 people.

In the same period, the Israeli occupying forces have continued the systematic violence against the Palestinian people that has for too long characterized this more than 46-year military occupation, including the killing and injury of civilians in violent military raids and arrest operations and the excessive use of force against civilian protesters. Yet another young Palestinian life has been lost to this senseless violence by the occupying Power. In the early morning hours of 17 September in the Jenin refugee camp, occupying forces shot and killed Islam Husam al-Toubasi, a 21-year-old Palestinian, and injured several other Palestinians, including a 13-year-old boy. Also in the Jenin refugee camp, 17-year-old Kareem Sobhi Abu Sbeih, who was shot and wounded by the occupying forces on 20 August during another raid of the camp, tragically died of his wounds on 31 August. We condemn these killings and urge the international community to persist with their calls for Israel, the occupying Power, to respect its obligations under international law and to cease all such illegal actions and violence against the Palestinian people under its occupation.

Israel also continues its systematic detention and arrest of Palestinian civilians, many of them youth, further fuelling tensions and violent confrontations. Moreover, such actions deepen mistrust and poison the environment surrounding the peace negotiations as, despite the recent release of some long-term prisoners, the

occupying Power continues to add to the ranks of the thousands of Palestinians it is unlawfully and inhumanely imprisoning, including hundreds of children.

In this regard, on 3 September, clashes broke out in Abu Dis between local youth and Israeli occupying forces following the detention of a young Palestinian man reportedly suffering from cancer. Dozens of residents were treated for the effects of tear gas. On 2 September, Israeli occupying forces injured two Palestinians and arrested four others during a raid in the Old City of Nablus. This was followed by a raid, on 3 September, on the Bab Hutta neighbourhood in Jerusalem, in which at least 12 Palestinian men were arrested and detained. On 4 September, occupying forces raided the town of Beit Ummar and detained three Palestinian teenagers. On 5 September, clashes broke out in the Al-Fawwar refugee camp in Al-Khalil after occupying forces raided the camp, firing gas bombs and rubber-coated bullets, injuring dozens of people. On 10 September, occupying forces raided the Arroub refugee camp near Al-Khalil and detained 13 Palestinians between the ages of 18 and 26 and assaulted several others. On 12 September, the occupying forces detained two Palestinian brothers from Beit Fajjar village east of Bethlehem. On 15 September, occupying forces raided several villages and detained at least 14 Palestinians.

Also inflaming tensions and instability have been the constant harassment, intimidation and violence by extremist Israeli settlers, with the collusion and protection of the occupying forces, against the Palestinian people and their properties. Such unlawful actions are the cause of widespread suffering, fear and trauma among the population and, in particular in the case of provocations in Occupied East Jerusalem, threaten to instigate further confrontation between the sides. We reiterate our demand for the perpetrators to be held accountable for their crimes.

The following are just some of the examples of Israeli settler violence in recent weeks: on 1 September, five Palestinians were injured when settlers threw stones at Palestinian cars near the Jalazoun refugee camp; on 5 September, settlers threw stones at Palestinian residents and houses in the al-Sowana area of East Jerusalem; on 8 September, settlers stoned Palestinian vehicles travelling near Nablus, damaging 25 vehicles; on 10 September, settlers set fire to Palestinian agricultural fields east of Nablus; and on 15 September, an Israeli settler, using a metal rod, hit and injured a 48-year-old Palestinian man in East Jerusalem. Also, on 11 September, a group of settlers raided the village of Salem, East of Nablus, in an attempt to raise the land, and were aided by the Israeli occupying forces, who injured three Palestinians and arrested seven others at the scene while allowing the settlers to carry out their vandalism and destruction.

All of the above illegal and provocative actions by Israel, the occupying Power, and its settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are causing suffering for the Palestinian people and worsening conditions on the ground. Such actions threaten to further destabilize the situation in the midst of the turmoil already roiling the region, and are actions that are completely contradictory to the conditions necessary for advancing the negotiations and contradictory to the objectives of the peace process as a whole.

We thus renew our call upon the international community, including the Security Council, to uphold international law and the responsibilities to address this critical situation. For the sake of peace, all efforts must be made to compel Israel,

the occupying Power, to cease all violations and abide by its obligations under international law. This is imperative for reducing tensions, promoting calm and allowing for emergence of an environment truly conducive for the pursuit of serious negotiations aimed at bringing an end to the Israeli occupation, achieving the independence of the State of Palestine in accordance with the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and justly resolving all outstanding final status issues, including the problem of the Palestine refugees, in accordance with international law and relevant resolutions, including resolution 194 (III), which are all requirements for the establishment of lasting peace and security between the two sides.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 472 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. The letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 26 August 2013 (A/ES-10/602-S/2013/509) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations